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UPRIGHT

VERSUS

LOPING WRITING

Being an Inquiry into the respective Merits of Sloping and Upright or Vertical Writing . . . . . .

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BY

HN JACKSON, F.E.I.S., M.C.P.

AUTHOR OF

"The System of Upright Penmanship"

WILLIAM BEVERLEY HARISON
59 Fifth Avenue
NEW YORK

L43

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by

William Beverley Harison

Upright

VERSUS

Sloping Writing.

THAT the writing of the present age needs reforming few will be inclined to deny; that the illegible and illiterate scrawls (yclept writing) which comprise so much of our correspondence are a nuisance and a daily cross to tens of thousands who have to wade through and decipher these erratic aberrations of quill-driving, every one will readily acknowledge.

Our most sanguine friends will never dare to hazard the proposition that we have arrived at the goal of perfection in penmanship. And the question arises, Is this lamentable defect in our ordinary handwriting an incurable malady? Is it the result of faulty education, of subsequent demoralization, or of inherent and inevitable imperfection?

That numbers of good writers at school degenerate into most slovenly and inveterate scribblers in after years is a well-known fact; but this will not account for the unduly large proportion of wretchedly bad writers who mulct their fellows in the daily penalty of reading their inky attenuations and wriggles; one of several reasons for which is, that there is a contrary motion which is more than ample to counterbalance this degeneracy, viz.: the considerable number of bad and indifferent writers who on leaving school and entering business pick up in their caligraphy, and become not only fair, but actually good and elegant penmen. No! we must look further back, and penetrate inside the schoolroom for the answer to our question. The solution of the problem will be found in the workshops where the articles are

manufactured. If a similar cry were raised against reading, arithmetic, or other branch of learning, we should intuitively refer the cause or root of the offence back to the schoolmaster. Now this sad condition of things must obviously be traceable to Bad teaching, Defective methods, or a Wrong system of penmanship.

Bad teaching may at once be put out of court. It is impossible that inferior teaching should obtain in all our schools, of whatsoever grade; and, besides, all subjects would be more or less affected, but they are not. Our field of investigation, therefore, narrows down to the writing, or system itself, and the methods adopted for teaching it.

The prevailing style of penmanship that obtains generally, almost universally, is the Italian, or sloping style. It is somewhat ornate (as modern taste counts ornateness), and the more it slopes the more it spreads or sprawls.

As to the methods adopted for teaching it, they have ever been "On change," never settled —ever fluctuating. Hardly any unanimity can be detected amongst the distinguished exponents of this system of oblique writing. To begin at the beginning, Doctors differ at the outset, and copy-books as well as manuals of the art, exhibit as many angles of inclination as there are series in the market—nay, considerably more, as, occasionally, a single series will present a bewildering diversity of slope in its several books, and each angle, of course, is the right one! Some authors advocate 15°, others 20°, 30°, 40°, 50°, or even 60° to 65° of divergence from the perpendicular; and these angles, with dozens of intermediate slopes, are daily in use. As a natural sequence, the writing of the public presents the same charming variety of obliquity.

Taking from a bundle of correspondence just arrived twenty letters, and carefully testing their degrees of slope, the figures came out as follows: 1 at 17°, 1 at 22°, 2 at 30°, 4 at 36°, 2 at 38°, 3 at 40°, 1 at 42°, 3 at 43°, 2 at 47°, and 1 at 63°, making an average inclination of 38°.

Next, as to the Best Position of the body, the divergence of opinion is just as wide. Many acknowledged experts are now agitating for a straight and upright position—a posture, be it remarked, that necessitates for sloping writing a corresponding tilting of the copy-book,—whilst a large section of orthodox conservatives in caligraphy maintain the superiority of the old style, viz.: the left side turned towards and the right side turned away from the desk. Also, with regard to the direction of the pen, we meet with a like want of harmony. The pen must point towards the shoulder, away from the shoulder, or otherwise, as the caprice or judgment of the authority may dictate.

Here is a system of penmanship that has perplexed the wisest heads for nearly two centuries, and the confusion is as great as ever; a system of penmanship that turns out more bad writers than good writers; a system that our teachers declare is a terribly hard system to teach, and our pupils protest is a "horrid hard" system to learn; a system that demands from its votaries artificial and fatiguing attitudes and abnormal strains, and a system that inflicts on numbers of its exponents no small amount of physical weariness, pain, disease, and deformity (as we shall have demonstrated to us before the close of this paper). Can such a system be sound? Surely, if sloping writing perpetrates and perpetuates all these evils, the enemy is discovered, the head and front of the offending is made manifest. In our own mind there is no uncertainty. We believe, and we know, that oblique writing is wrong, fundamentally wrong, altogether wrong—that it is injurious to the writer and also to the reader, that it has little or nothing to recommend it, and much, if not everything, to condemn it; and that upright or vertical writing is the best style of penmanship conceivable, and that it is superior in all and every respect to sloping. The object of this paper is, by a careful comparison of the two systems, to display and prove the UNQUESTIONABLE ADVANTAGES OF UPRIGHT PENMANSHIP in

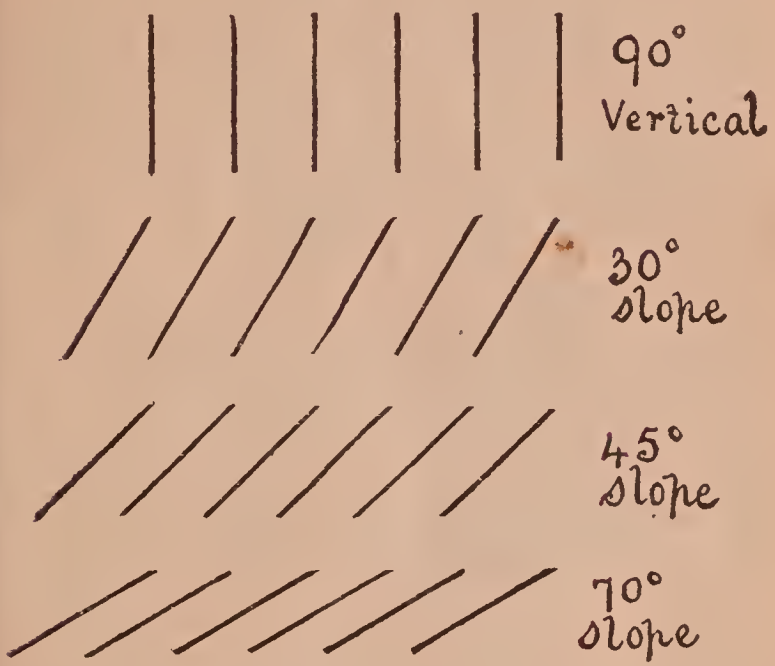
whatever aspect it may be viewed. It shall be our duty, then, in the following lines to thoroughly sift the claims and merits of both styles, and to allow no prejudice to weaken the recognition and appreciation of everything in sloping writing, that either is, has been, or can be deemed worthy of commendation.

Is upright penmanship To be, or Not to be?—that's the question. Our reply is in the affirmative, and it will be convenient in this examination to discuss the rival systems with reference —1st, as to Legibility; 2d, as to Hygienic Principles and considerations as they affect the eye, the spine, and the wrist or hand; 3d, as to Speed, or rate of pen-travelling; 4th, as to Economy; and 5th, as to Ease in Acquiring and Teaching.

I.—LEGIBILITY.

Which is the more legible—vertical or oblique writing? Enthusiasts on both sides claim the verdict on this point, and it would consequently appear to be a question of opinion. We are rather inclined to think it a matter of fact, which no opinion can alter or modify. Would any of these sloping writers, who declare the superior or even equal legibility of their oblique penmanship, dare to practically test their opinions? Do they ever dream of having their own literary productions *printed in italics*. Imagine our newspapers, books and pamphlets presented to us in the sloping instead of in the good plain old upright Roman type! Public opinion would condemn it, veto it and change it at once. Not only common sense but optics and geometry repudiate this assumption by sloping writers of equal or superior legibility. Italics and sloping script cannot be read as easily as Roman type and vertical writing of the same size and weight. The more distinct and separate objects or lines are the more perfectly they are seen. The closer they are to each other the more mixed or confused they become. As an illustration, which in itself is conclusive on this subject, we have drawn four

sets of equal length and parallel lines all from equidistant apices, as marked. The first set is vertical, the lower sets are at 30°, 45°



and 70° inclination from the perpendicular, respectively. If the reader, placing this or any similar diagram against a wall, gradually recedes from it he will be astonished to find the strokes of the upper line legible and clear, when those in the lower sets have merged into different degrees of undistinguishable haziness. Now, since it is a geometrical fact that, as the writing slopes, so the down strokes gradually approach each other; and further, as it is an acknowledged fact that the closer the lines are the more illegible they become, we conclude that the superior legibility of the vertical is unmistakably demonstrated, and any existing or lingering doubt finally disposed of.

There really can be no uncertainty in the matter. It is like proving an axiomatic truth. Vertical writing has only to be seen to

be accorded the highest award for legibility. It is pre-eminently THE MOST READABLE WRITING THAT CAN BE PRODUCED.

II.—HYGIENIC PRINCIPLES.

These hygienic considerations are of paramount significance, and cannot, dare not, be ignored by true educationists. In writing for any length of time, uninterruptedly, there are certain parts of the body that exhibit signs of fatigue and symptoms of pain—viz., the eye, hand. chest and spine. So severely, indeed, are those limbs and parts frequently affected that the seriousness of the evils has induced the highest authorities to take cognizance of the matter, and not only Teachers, but School Boards and Governments, have instituted formal investigations for the purpose of discovering a remedy. As though to give the strongest emphasis to hygienic demands, medical men have initiated and pursued their researches quite independently of educators and teachers. Their opinions and deductions not only agree in the main, they coincide entirely; and it is the conviction and opinion of these specialists that sloping writing is essentially bad, since it inflicts upon its adherents all the injury to eye, hand, chest and spine that a pernicious system is able to exert. How often premature blindness, the deformed hand, the round shoulders and the curved spine are induced amongst those who write for long hours none but medical men have any means of ascertaining, but the catalogue is a sad one; and even where these alarming consequences do not ensue, how much more frequently do aching backs, stiffened fingers and weary eyes remind us that the way of sloping writers is hard. That oblique caligraphy is answerable for a lamentably large amount of ill that might be avoided goes without saying, but eminent doctors have still thought it both necessary and wise to assert it, and to assert it repeatedly and emphatically. Mr. Noble Smith, F.R.C.S.,

who is considered one of the first authorities on spinal curvature, speaks with no uncertain sound on the detrimental effects of oblique writing. His extensive hospital and other practice, his profound study and his intimate acquaintance with school hygiene (especially with reference to postures), invest his utterances with almost oracular vividness and seriousness. After making an official and formal survey of, and inquiry into the question of "Postures in Writing," he is only the more confirmed, if that were possible, in his previously expressed convictions. He declares in various works and publicly, that

"The postures of young people assumed in the sloping writing are one of the chief factors in the production of spinal curvature; and although good seats and desks are a great help in securing a better position, it is impossible for writers to avoid twisting the spine unless they adopt an upright style of caligraphy. Vertical writing is consistent with all hygienic principles."

Similarly, distinguished medical men, both in Germany and England, advance concurrent testimony equally weighty. The well-known Drs. Berlin and Remboldt, who made an exhaustive inquiry into the effects of handwriting upon eyesight and spinal malformation for the Wurtemberg Government, show conclusively that the sloping style causes the head to hang over, so that in some cases the spine is curved, and in most cases the writer soon grows weary. In numerous instances the eyes also are injured where those organs are not naturally strong, or where a large amount of writing has to be executed.

Allowing, then, and taking into account that vertical writing requires no twist of the spine, no cramping of the hand, no compressing of the chest, no unequal strain upon the eyes, what an unanswerable argument is afforded for its adoption!

TEACHERS WHO RECOGNIZE THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION WILL NOT LIGHTLY EVADE THE OBLIGATION, BUT WILL CONSCIENTIOUSLY ENDEAVOR TO SATISFY THEMSELVES AS TO THE ACTUAL FACTS, AND THEN FOLLOW THE DICTATES OF THEIR JUDGMENT. We submit that any system of penmanship which is chargeable with, and responsible for, a tithe of the evils which teachers and medical men alike have ascribed to sloping writing, is entirely unworthy the support or countenance of those whose duty it is to teach their scholars nothing but the Best, the Truest, and Most Useful in all branches of their instruction.

We are not alarmists; we do not desire to exaggerate the danger, but we would remark here by how much is the offence aggravated and intensified when all these attendant and numerous ill effects are invited, risked, and incurred, not to secure a positive benefit or good, not to obtain a style of writing admittedly superior to all others, not to compass the largest percentage of good writers, but to impose upon an already overtaxed humanity an illegible, inferior, and imperfect style of writing, in which we constantly find 30 per cent. positively and hopelessly undecipherable, some 50 per cent. medium and tolerably fair, with a small margin of 20 per cent. really good and elegant in quality. In the Upright Penmanship none of these violations of hygienic or physiological canons are found, for none are really possible. The writer sits straight before his desk, both arms freely thrown thereon, the pen held naturally between the thumb and two forefingers, pointing in the direction of the hand and arm. As in reporting and as in drawing, so in vertical writing, the posture is the most natural and simple that could be prescribed, and therefore the strain both upon the muscles and upon the nerves is the least that could be exacted for the efficient performance of the work to be done. The eye looks straight down upon its task, the hand and wrist are in the best

pose for a running handwriting, the body itself is not in the least distressed by artificial attitudes, the spine rests in a perfectly normal condition, the chest remains unrestrained by any undue leaning forward, and writing is produced under the most favorable conditions, with the least expenditure of energy, and therefore with the minimum amount of weariness and fatigue. The evidence of experts both in teaching and medicine is all in favor of the vertical penman; we may therefore look upon sloping writing as already doomed, if it is to be judged on grounds of a purely hygienic character.

III.—SPEED OR RATE OF PEN-TRAVELLING.

Several considerations enter into the discussion on speed, and each of them is adverse to sloping penmanship. The section we have just been studying will help us here wonderfully. Position has much to say in this matter of speed. A free and easy position must be more favorable to, and also must ensure, a higher rate than a stiff and constrained posture. If it can be—and we think it has been—shown that the attitude in vertical writing is natural and free, whilst in sloping writing it is twisted and awkward, the question of relative speed is settled at once and forever. The advantages which a free and easy posture confer on a writer must guarantee a higher rate of speed. The sloping writer is necessarily and heavily handicapped, and hopelessly struggles into the goal a very bad second. Moreover, it will be found on trial that the strokes which a vertical writer makes in his movements with the pen are in themselves easier than the forward-pushing stroke of the sloping style. The upward forward stroke of the oblique writer encounters more opposition from the paper, and is, consequently, much harder to make than are the side strokes peculiar to an upright system, in which there is necessarily less tendency to spluttering, and the lines are made with greater ease, and therefore with greater speed. Once more, after care-

ful calculations, it is found that the ordinary sloping writing necessitates the pen travelling over 25 per cent. more length of outline than vertical writing of the same size, and accordingly occupies 25 per cent. more time.

Now, unless the advocates of obliquity can prove it possible to accomplish 100 units of work in the same or a less time than 80 units require, it is patent that Upright Penmanship must be more rapid than sloping. It is simply impossible to make a line 5 inches long in as short a time as we can make a line only 4 inches long. But what an appalling fact confronts us if this be true!

Nearly one-quarter of all the writing power in the country going to waste! Let us but contemplate the truth that 1 hour out of every 5, 8 out of every 40 (about a week's work) can be, ought to be, saved, and there will be no indecision as to the comparative merits of the two systems. Vertical writing can be much more easily and quickly produced than sloping, and it is therefore superior to it in point of speed.

The receivers in the telegraph offices write vertically because they must write rapidly, plainly, and the position assumed must be that producing the least fatigue.

"I have written millions of words under the pressure of rapid telegraphic transmission and have always found this style the easiest and most comfortable."—A. E. SINK, Manager Gen'l Oper. Dep't, W. U. Tel. Co., 195 B'dw'y, N. Y.

IV.—ECONOMY IN SPACE, ETC.

We have just proved the superiority of vertical writing where economy of time is concerned—a word or two as to economy in space.

Since vertical writing speaks for itself, we need not linger long on this division of our subject. The sprawling, straggling scrawl so common in the oblique styles becomes compact, and characteristic—full of individuality—in the upright. Let any one try the experiment for himself. After repeated comparison of copy-book headlines, it is found that for the same or similar sized writ-

ing the vertical will yield from 30 to 60 per cent. more matter in the same space-length. Several books were tested page by page and line by line, with the surprising disclosure that where a sloping copy yielded 25 or 30, a vertical line would furnish between 40 and 50 letters.

Then as to economy in ordinary correspondence, what student, lawyer, clergyman, merchant, clerk, has not resorted to the vertical style times without number when wishing to compress his writing into small space? The truth is that sloping induces sprawling, whilst the upright demands contraction. As an independent test let any one take specimen (not selected) letters from a batch of correspondence, and count the average words or letters in an equal number of lines of equal-sized writing in each, the result will average about 123 sloping to 177 vertical, or as 100 to 144, and the upright caligraphy is far more legible.

There can be no doubt as to the economy of space effected by the new style; indeed its strongest opponents have, almost without exception, conceded this advantage. To all sections of the community such an economy is of great value.

V.—EASE IN TEACHING.

We now approach the last, and perhaps the most interesting part of our discussion, and our arena is the schoolroom. How do the several styles affect the teacher and his pupils? After numerous conversations with individual and large bodies of teachers, the one great complaint with them is the insuperable difficulty in teaching sloping writing. First, there is the peculiar position of the body, sideways to the desk; next, there is the position of the arms, one on the desk and the other close in by the side; then the hand must be twisted outwards, the pen must point towards and over the right shoulder; and when all this is obtained (when is it obtained? I would ask) the next task—and it generally proves in every sense a cruel task—is to get the writing arranged, the angle deter-

mined, and the angle observed. Is it not a notorious fact that hundreds and thousands of children will write vertically, whether their teachers sanction it or no? Is it not true that pupils will tilt up their books to an angle sufficient to give verticality (optically considered) to the down strokes, and will hold the pen as vertical writers hold it (pointing outwards), notwithstanding the reiterated remonstrances of their teachers? A pupil is restless, and changes his posture or angular inclination to the desk, his copy-book records the incident where a painfully obvious break in the parallelism shocks the teacher's eye; he tilts his book or straightens it again at his own or the teacher's desire, and the obliquity of his writing varies most faithfully in consequence. In vertical writing none of these difficulties and anomalies irritate the teacher; none of these absurdities vex the puny bodies and the souls of our children. There is no posture of the body to inculcate or attain, for every girl and boy will naturally assume the right posture; there is nothing to do with regard to the pen except to restrain it from falling into a wrong direction, certainly there is no care demanded to train it into quite an awkward and constrained direction. The book lies evenly on the desk, the writer sits evenly at the desk, the pen follows the direction of the hand and arm that guide it, and the writing always observes the one position of the perpendicular, for there is only one vertical to a horizontal, whereas there are hundreds of degrees of slope between 0° and 90°. The difficulties of the teacher and of the pupil are reduced to a minimum, and, so far as it can be, writing and the teaching of writing are pleasant factors in the ordinary school-life. It may confidently be concluded that the burden thus lifted from the shoulder of our instructors and our children is no small consideration, and that from an educational standpoint, such an argument should be sufficient to command the adoption of Upright Penmanship in every school throughout the world.

In conclusion, there are many things in this paper that might have received more elaborate treatment; there are many other items, and somewhat important items, too, which we have not hinted at (one, e.g., is the saving of expense both in schools and business by the economy gained in vertical writing). Nevertheless, IF VERTICAL WRITING IS FAR MORE LEGIBLE, FAR MORE HEALTHY, FAR MORE ECONOMICAL, FAR MORE SPEEDY, AND FAR MORE EASILY ACQUIRED AND TAUGHT, what excuse can any longer be urged for the continuance of sloping writing? What excuse can be offered for not at once introducing Upright Penmanship as the universal and only system of writing to be taught, practiced, and encouraged throughout the country? Prejudice and custom are everywhere giving way in face of the marvelous success which so invariably follows upon the introduction of the New Style Vertical Writing. On all hands, indeed, from Principals of Public Colleges down to Teachers of Elementary Schools, it is generally conceded that Upright Penmanship has produced better results in a few years than the Sloping Writing has ever reached in as many centuries. IN SHORT, ALL EXPERIENCE PROVES WHAT AN EMINENT EDUCATIONIST HAS RECENTLY STATED, VIZ., THAT VERTICAL WRITING HAS ONLY TO BE TRIED TO BE ENTHUSIASTICALLY ADOPTED AND PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED.

In making his series of copy books Mr. Jackson has based his headlines upon what has been found, after many years practice in teaching the Vertical Penmanship in schools, to be thoroughly practical and possible to be obtained by children. He has for this reason reproduced as nearly as possible actual pen writing rather than the *finely executed hair lines of the engraver*, which, it is universally conceded, discourage the pupils—and such discouragement is a serious im-

pediment to successful teaching. As a proof of the practical result it is found that the handwriting obtained from his teaching is almost precisely similar to that used by the most rapid and best writers in the Western Union Telegraph service—a hand that they have acquired as the *most rapid*, *most distinct* and *least tiring;* many of them write in this way at the rate of from 30 to 40 words a minute for hours at a time. *This hand is condemned* by the theorists who fail to recognize that the *practical* rather than the *theoretical* is what our children need. This emphasis of the theoretical at the expense of the practical has led and will no doubt lead to the imposition upon the children of impossible ideals, in the shape of "beautifully engraved" models. Mr. Jackson prefers to be criticised, as using "heavy, irregular, ungraceful and altogether undesirable forms." by competing publishers, rather than to lose the satisfaction of seeing the improvement that his system has made and is making in the children's work, and he is quite willing to let results speak for themselves.

In arranging the series of Vertical Penmanship Pads some means of obviating that old difficulty, the copying of the pupils' own copy rather than the headline, is aimed at. It is believed that this can be successfully obtained by having the pupil write first one, then the next headline, on the same page, rather than by constantly telling him not to follow his own written copy. The possible unlimited review will be helpful in many other ways that will suggest themselves to teachers. Pads will be furnished with the copy slips fastened at one end or loose, as may be desired.

THE
CYCLAUTOGRAPH.

This machine is the invention of some schoolmen who have had occasion for many years to use many copies of written work of various kinds, and have tried for this purpose the various machines in the market, such as the Mimeograph, Simplex, Hektograph, Cyclostyle, but without satisfactory results; for, while some of them yielded the number of copies wanted, the trouble in preparation of the printers' ink was so great that the machine could not be used. The various forms of the Hektograph or gelatine process were fairly good, though the hand rubbing and care necessary to yield good, perfect copies, made it slow work obtaining a number of copies. Finally they experimented upon methods of adapting the gelatine process to a cylinder, and the result is the Cyclautograph, which has been successfully used for over a year. To use it the copy is written, as in the Hektographic process, with a specially prepared ink, with an ordinary pen on writing paper. By placing this copy on the copy sheet for one or two minutes the transfer is made; the copy sheet is then adjusted to the cylinder and the copies made by passing the paper through between this and the pressure roller, which gives an even, uniform pressure, yielding perfect copies. There is an adjustment for use of roll paper, which is

printed upon as it is wound up, through the machine; the action is absolutely continuous, and from 40 TO 100 COPIES CAN BE OBTAINED IN ONE MINUTE without trouble. There is no cleaning up necessary, the gelatine used, absorbs the ink from the surface in a few hours.

Since the operation of the Cyclautograph has proved so simple, rapid and satisfactory, the possible uses, especially for the live teacher, have greatly multiplied. The interest and effectiveness of school work may be vastly increased. Besides the evident adaptability to obtaining speedy reproductions of examination papers, suggestive synopses, topical work, diagrams, outline maps, etc., the machine has been found most available for securing a REAL SCHOOL PAPER. Every school can now have at small cost its own paper, composed and "printed" and bound entirely by the pupils themselves. In a nearby city school an edition of sixty-five copies, of more than twenty pages each, was recently put together by four of the boys in less than four hours. As a result of seeing all their own work reproduced in *fac-simile*, an immense stimulus has been added to the effort to improve penmanship and to compose acceptably.

Samples of work sent upon request.

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The purpose of these pads is to enable the teacher to give as much practice as may be deemed necessary with any particular set copy, the pupil writing one, two or more sheets, if it is thought advisable to do so, before exposing a new model. It is advisable, also, to avoid the discouragement, incident to failure. By the use of these pads failures may be removed, and a new copy sheet used, or several of them, until it is deemed advisable to proceed to the next step. Pads will be made to order in any of the different rulings that may be desired; when not otherwise ordered, the double guide lines will be furnished on the first numbers of the series only, single ruling on the higher numbers—the "finishing" numbers to be on unruled pads.

The copies are compiled from the JACKSON system for the reason that it is considered well to follow what has been found best after many years experience.

The position considered best is that assumed in drawing, viz:—With the body straight before the desk, the copy slightly to the right and set squarely before the pupil, the pen held so that both points of the nib are in constant action, the pen handle inclined slightly away from the direction of the shoulder.

WILLIAM BEVERLEY HARISON,

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